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ABSTRACT

As the community of communication educators struggles to resolve many issues within its ranks, the question of gender bias in the world of debate, and beyond, continues to be raised. Stereotypical socialization, with women as nurturing/submissive and men as dominant/aggressive, begins early and continues throughout life, and the educator is part of this process. When gender differences are examined in a competitive event such as a debate, the line is quickly crossed between gender stereotype and sexual harassment. A study by Bruschke and Johnson (1994), which included female students and judges, showed that this stereotyping is firmly set in the minds of males and females alike. A specific course of action for educators is suggested: (1) student and coach must become aware of and discuss the different ways in which men and women communicate--videos are excellent for this; (2) the class should review the legal definitions of sexual harassment; and (3) the instructor should make it clear that harassment claims will be given immediate and serious attention and a clearly stated policy of behavior should be in place, with a specific course of redress. (Samples, including rules for discussion sessions and suggestions for male/female communication, are appended; contains 19 references.) (CR)

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The Double-Standard in CEDA:
A Feminist Perspective on Gender Stereotyping in Intercollegiate Debate

by

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Introduction and Justification

As a young woman rushed breathlessly up to her coach with the good news that she had done "well" in a debate round she was overheard to exclaim, "I did what you told me, I tried to be as masculine as I could!" At another debate tournament, a male novice debater was surprised to learn that intimidation (physically leaning into the personal space of his female opponents and raising his voice) was not an ethical form of persuasion. On another day, the department chair of a female debate coach stated with some assurance that the "female rights" issue had been addressed successfully and, with "female parity" established, the world might now turn its attentions to more "pressing" problems. These scenarios are real, all-too-real. They clearly indicate that gender stereotyping and its resultant problems of sexual harassment are still a pervasive part of the female collegiate experience. The very clear message is that women in debate must assume a masculine persona if they hope to be successful in this male-dominated, competitive arena. As the community of communication educators struggle to resolve many issues within its ranks, the question of gender bias in the world of debate, and beyond, continues to be raised. Can women hope for fair treatment in competitive communication events? This treatise will offer some answers to this question.

The focus of this discussion will be three-fold. Starting with an examination of the status of gender stereotyping and gender bias in competitive forms of communication, the causes of these gender perceptions can be argued. This discussion has relied on research which addresses "competitive" communication across academic and business arenas. The next step will be to present a review of the

problem of sexual harassment. And finally, specific suggestions will be made which may help educators address these problems. The intent of this discussion is not to assign blame nor reduce females to the role of passive victims. Instead it will challenge all educators to understand gender stereotyping and counter its ill-effects. It is sincerely hoped that the academic community will realize that not enough progress has been achieved in improving the status of women in our ranks. And finally, it is time to take action within our own spheres of influence to assuage some of the cultural obstacles which women must often overcome.

Gender Stereotypes - On-Going Socialization

While interpersonal communication texts assure us that stereotyping is a natural process which facilitates interaction, little time is spent on the more dangerous problems in cultural stereotypes which Stewart & Logan (1994) define as a means of labeling people which may serve to "keep them in their place" (p. 87). In developing a sensitivity to this problem one need only look at the variety of sources which highlight the pervasiveness of the gender stereotypes which determine our perceptions and influence how we communicate.

Chaffins, et al (1995) note that stereotypes based on gender have historically placed women in a nurturing, submissive role while men are seen as the dominant, more aggressive gender. Masculine traits are perceived as successful while feminine traits are deemed submissive. Psychologists and communication theorists have noted a wide range of gender traits which lead to conflict and resentment between the sexes. Tingley (1994) states that men talk about concrete things (like money or sports), are competitive (even in

conversation) and want to prove a point or solve a problem while women focus on feelings or relationships and are better listeners, but often come across in conversation as vague.

Women, according to Chaffins, et al (1995) are socialized to believe that they are less capable of hard-nosed competition and "generally accept the belief [that] femininity and achievement are incompatible" (p. 385). Cultural dictates have assigned male characteristics as valuable in competitive communication events while female traits are consigned to successful personal relationships (Stewart & Logan, 1994). Loyd & Wilson (1990) add that this social-construct is so strong that men display dominant nonverbal behavior whereas women display submissive nonverbals.

While Horvath (1995) examined the biological differences in communication traits of the sexes it was notably admitted that stereotypical socialization is a significant factor in the attractiveness or success of any specific trait. This socialization begins early and continues throughout our lives. Many anecdotal examples can be cited how the smallest of children are pigeon-holed into behavior patterns based on their sex. Baxter (1994), in criticizing the sexist attitudes of some researchers, notes that if "girls play with cars, they're ersatz boys. They aren't attracted to cars because the automobile represents freedom, power, status, speed" (p. 51).

The educator is also part of the socialization process. Schnitt (1992) explained that teachers were more supportive of males if the lesson was male-oriented and of females if the lesson was more female-oriented, thus reaffirming social stereotypes and gender roles. Schnitt (1992) added that "over the past few years, the

suspicion has increased that 'gender-specific' stereotypes are ingrained not despite but rather because of mixed classroom" (p. 50). Schnitt observed that male students received more pedagogical attention overall than their female counterparts.

These gender stereotypes continue to establish the rules in the business and academic arenas. St. Pierre, et al (1994) found that occupational stereotypes still determine hiring practices in regards to women. Societal norms often inhibit women from entering managerial positions in corporations. A report by the Business and Professional Women's Foundation (1992) stated that while women and minorities are allowed to enter the male-dominated world of business they are restricted to middle management positions; rarely allowed into the upper echelons of the nation's largest companies. College campuses are not more inviting, according to a report by the National Association for Women in Education (Kelly, 1996). This report described an inhospitable climate for women noting that female students "are interrupted more than men when they speak during class" (p. 7D), while women faculty numbers and promotions to administrative posts have changed little over the last decade.

Educators may not want to hear these facts again, but the sad truth is that little has changed for women in education or business during a decade perceived as an era of change. While women's issues are discussed, the rate of progress is discouraging. Crenshaw (1993) astutely noted that even the debate community has reduced the discourse of feminism (in rounds) to a set of stereotypes. "Single, monolithic" ideas consigned to feminists with "identical motivations and methods" (p. 73). Borisoff & Hahn (1995) explain that such simplifications are a function of the natural polarity of language:

> History undoubtedly has shaped our tendency to view the world in terms of opposites. Included in this tradition is the tendency to divide and assign behavioral norms and roles according to sexes...It is difficult to think about masculine and feminine behavior without simultaneously conjuring the sex-trait and sex-role stereotypes that accompany these behaviors...We also persist in linking these characteristics to diverse contexts so that stereotypical male or female behavior becomes the presumed norm in different situations...Thus, the "standards" for communicative behavior in these public and private domains have decidedly privileged whichever sex has been culturally assigned primary responsibility for each particular environment (p. 382).

Society have privileged male communicators in such competitive venues as the debate round over the female.

Sexual Harassment: An On-Going Dilemma

When these gender differences are examined in a competitive event such as a debate round the line is quickly crossed between gender stereotype and sexual harassment. If a female debater gives a vague answer in a cross-ex she is perceived as unprepared or stupid. If a judge sees aggressive behavior in a female the perception is inconsistent with well-established social norms. It is no wonder that many of our females are frustrated or angry. Evidence of unequal treatment of females in debate is plentiful.

Bruschke & Johnson (1994) point out that female debaters averaged lower speaker points in CEDA rounds with gender being assigned as the only, discernable cause. Interestingly, their study

showed that female judges conferred the fewest points. The social stereotype of the male-dominant debate world is firmly set in the minds of male and female alike.

More ominous examples are also available. Stepp, et al (1994) openly conclude that sexual harassment has found a comfortable home in CEDA debate. Their survey noted that gender harassment and seductive behaviors were relatively high while actual sexual imposition was relatively low. So, while few female debaters are actually physically harassed or sexually coerced they seem destined to endure insulting remarks and sexually inappropriate comments. McAuliff (1995) included personal examples of sexual harassment in a Pi Kappa Delta forum on women and minorities. Her ballots showed that judges associated aggressive language and behavior as symptoms of PMS. Bartanen & Hanson (1994) point out that "some forensics students, coaches, and judges create and tolerate a culture of exclusion through abusive discourse and verbal aggression" (p. 16). Out of twelve offensive remarks, seven were sexually hostile. Tuman (1993) describes a debate round in which two female debaters were subjected to "gender specific verbal abuse" (p. 84).

Beyond this debate-specific evidence there is support for the idea that women are subject to abuse and hostility in most areas of their educational experience. The Stepp, et al (1994) survey results are not uncommon in light of other university studies. The Review of Public Personnel Administration (1995) collected an extensive list of findings about sexual harassment in a large midwestern college which include: educational institutions are less likely to have an effective sexual harassment policy than the private sector; 19% of female students report sexual harassment, but this may only represent

.5% of actual incidence; women tend to characterize more behaviors as sexual harassment; men are more tolerant of sexual harassment; 71% of complainants fear retaliation or further harassment; levels of uncertainty about sexual harassment policy effectiveness are high.

None of these findings should come as a surprise. Most debate coaches and students have their own stories to tell. What is most evident is that while women and men continue to talk about these issues the patterns of sexual harassment and gender bias continue

Gender Education: An On-Going Solution

The purpose of this report is to challenge debate educators to take specific and immediate action. It is heartening to note that the CEDA community has embraced the concepts of reform by adding a constitutional policy to deal with sexual harassment complaints. Bartanen & Hanson (1994) have produced the Tournament Speech Statement in an effort to curb verbal aggression of any sort. These documents are laudable, but do not answer the real problem of socialization of gender bias. Nor do they offer an on-going example to debate students of the communication traits which are inclusive. Educators must help break the cycle of sexual stereotyping and gender harassment. Some programs for dealing with sexual harassment have proven successful in breaking the social chain of verbal aggression and sexual harassment (Ali, 1994). There must now be a commitment within the debate community to restate and reinforce the values and practices which will afford fairness and respect to all participants.

To this end a specific course of action is recommended. These suggestions are drawn from courses in gender communication as well as from the private sector. Private organizations have had to deal with sexual harassment as the number of complaints and lawsuits have

significantly increased over the past few years (Egler, 1995). The specific suggestions are designed to raise consciousness about gender bias and develop a workable policy to discourage sexual harassment.

First, the student and coach must become aware of the different ways in which men and women communicate. The initial step is to start a dialogue about these social differences. Several videos are available which demonstrate these differences. Most are short enough to view during an hour-long class and still leave time for student discussion (Appendix A). The information in one such video (Appendix B) outlines various gender-specific traits in scenarios which allow the student to see how communication can lead to conflict between women and men. After viewing the video the instructor may choose to offer a list of "do's and don't's" which can correct some of the common communication problems between the sexes (Appendix C & D).

The discussions of problems and solutions to gender bias and stereotyping should not take place in a vacuum. Nor should the instructor trust herself (or himself) to be free from social perceptions. Therefore, the second part of any class on these issues should include a review of legal definitions of sexual harassment. The Supreme Court has expanded these definitions to include sexual and non-sexual behavior and comments (Appendix E). The instructor should make sure that students are aware that harassment is in the perception of the harassee. Real awareness must shift perceptions from what is said to the impact those comments have on others.

Finally, the instructor should make is very clear to all students that harassment claims will be given immediate and serious attention. A clearly stated policy of behavior should be in place. A specific course of redress must also be in place for the student

who feels they have been harassed. Policy statements from the private sector can be reviewed and adopted for the particular organization or university (Appendix G). If these issues are given the time and attention they deserve, it is hoped that all students and faculty members will benefit from fair and open interaction.

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APPENDIX A

Establishing ground rules for discussion sessions are important. Discussions should empower the students by helping them instigate behavior policy rather than simply establishing prohibitions.

1. Give students an opportunity to talk about issues of harassment and role definition in a safe environment; i.e., promise and maintain confidentiality with the group.
2. Develop a list of true incidents that reflect positive, neutral and negative interactions among students and coaches.
3. Present information about past incidents in a way that demonstrates how the same situations can be viewed in very different ways be different people; e.g., a comment which may be seen as hostile to a female while being thought of as inoffensive to a male.
4. Allow students to establish some of their own ground rules for behavior and some procedures by which complaints of harassment can be handled.
5. Provide plenty of time for discussion and review of principles for interactions that will be most appropriate for the individual class.

Source: Laab, J.L. (August, 1994). Kinney narrows the gender gap. *Personnel Journal, 73*, 83-89

APPENDIX C

The following tips can help you get your message across to members of the opposite sex.

If you are male:

1. Talk more about your feelings.
2. Become an active listener and empathize with others.
3. Don't view each conversation as a "win-lose" situation.
4. Eliminate all sex-related jokes.

If you are female:

1. Speak up. Don't expect men to read your feelings.
2. Stop apologizing. You'll sound and feel more powerful.
3. Scan the front page of the business and sports sections every morning.
4. Lighten up. Take your job and education, not yourself, seriously.
5. Understand that sex role differences will be difficult to overcome.

Source: Laab, J.L. (August, 1994). Kinney narrows the gender gap. *Personnel Journal, 73*, 83-89

Communication Suggestions for Females

Successful women in business or professional settings often sound indistinguishable from men. Watch how you use language to be sure you do not diminish your authority.

1. Be objective rather than emotional when talking with male co-workers. Rather than using emotional verbs such as "I feel," "I love," and "I hope," make direct statements like "It is," "We will," and "There are."

2. Do not allow men to interrupt you. If necessary, speak over a male who interrupts you. If he persists, increase your volume until he realizes that his interruptions are inappropriate.

3. Avoid tentative, deferential speech patterns.

Do not use tag endings which indicate uncertainty or the need for approval. "Monday is a holiday, isn't it?" Avoid disclaimers, prefatory comments that weaken the following statement. "I'm not sure but...

Minimize your use of hedges like "maybe" and "sort of."

4. Do not answer a question with a question. If someone asks you how the weather is for example, don't raise your voice and say, "It's hot and rainy" Instead, drop the tone of your voice and make a declarative statement.

5. Use strong quanitifiers like "always," "never," or "none" rather than qualifiers like "a bit" or "kind of".

Quantifiers make the speaker sound more confident.

6. Speak up more frequently in public settings such as meetings and classes.

Communication Suggestions for Males

1. Be willing to request help. Asking for assistance can help you accomplish what you want to do.

2. Use more body language, gestures, facial expression and shifts in voice tone to underscore the meaning of your words.

3. Do not interrupt or monopolize conversations with women. Males rarely interrupt each other. But in mixed-sex conversations, 96% of interruptions occurred when men interrupted females.

4. Use more direct eye contact. Look directly at females you are speaking to. Lack of direct facial contact gives the impression you are not giving the other person full attention or that you consider her comments unimportant.

5. Do not underestimate the validity of women's comments. Many males believe females are unable to separate the unimportant.

6. Do not belittle or discredit women's conversation style. Appreciating our differences will help you communicate better.

7. If you tend to dominate discussions in classes and meetings, back off a notch. Encourage women to share their thoughts in public.

Permission by Learning Seed, from *Gender and Communication* (1994).

APPENDIX D

Five Ways Men's & Women's Speech Patterns Differ

Women often speak in a tentative style that reduces their authority. Here are five speech patterns women use more frequently than men.

1. "Tag endings"

Tag endings are questions tagged on to the end of sentences. They make speakers appear more unsure of themselves.

SHE: "That test was tough, wasn't it?"

HE: That was a tough test!

2. Upward inflections

A rising intonation at the end of a sentence gives a sense of uncertainty. Making a statement as a statement sounds authoritative.

SHE: My neighbor played his stereo all night, so I didn't get any sleep?

HE: My neighbor played his stereo all night so I didn't get any sleep.

3. Emotional verbs

Women use more emotional verbs, such as, "I feel... I love... I hope."

SHE: I feel the report should be laid out with page maker.

SHE: "I love the student evaluation form you designed!

In the workplace, more direct statements are stronger and better convey meaning.

The report should be laid out with page maker.

The student evaluation form that you designed is excellent.

4. Qualifiers and Quantifiers

Qualifiers are words like "a bit" and "kind of." "Third quarter seems a bit long."

Quantifiers such as "always," "never," "all," or "none" sound more confident, less tentative. "Third quarter always seems so long."

5. Disclaimers and Hedges

A disclaimer is a phrase at the beginning of a sentence that weakens the following statement: "I'm not sure but..."

The hedge weakens an idea by including words like "maybe" and "sort of."

Permission by Learning Seed, from *Gender and Communication* (1994).

APPENDIX E

SUPREME COURT DEFINITION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Quid pro quo harassment occurs when acceptance or rejection of the alleged inappropriate conduct is used to make employment decisions (hiring, promotion, work assignments, pay increases, termination) that affect the person claiming harassment.

1. The conduct unreasonably interferes with the victim's job performance.
2. The conduct creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.
3. In 1993, the Supreme Court further clarified the above definitions by outlining these factors:
4. The conduct must "create an objectively hostile or abusive work environment--an environment that a reasonable person would find hostile or abusive." (Objective requirement). The Court adopted a reasonable person standard without comment on the "reasonable women" standard adopted in several jurisdictions.
5. Victims must "subjectively perceive the environment to be abusive" for the conduct to have altered the conditions of the victims' employment. (Subjective requirement)
6. While "tangible psychological injury" is not required for a sexual harassment charge, "offensive" conduct is not enough. Some conduct may fall between these two extremes.
7. Relevant factors to consider in investigations include frequency and severity of the discriminatory conduct, whether it is physically threatening or humiliating or a mere offensive utterance, and if it unreasonably interferes with employees' work performance.

APPENDIX F

Sexual harassment investigations should follow these steps:

1. Tell victims you will investigate within 24 hours.
2. Don't promise confidentiality in your sexual harassment policy or in victims' interviews. If you are informed of possible harassing conduct, you have a legal responsibility to fully examine the charges. You cannot practice due process if you promise accusers their identities won't be revealed.
3. Interview victims or charging parties first. Ask if victims will put their statements in writing, to be signed and notarized, which may prove valuable down the road. If they oppose written statements, you still should investigate the claim. Victims should avoid talking about the incident to others and allow human resources to conduct its own investigation. Warn victims about the personal risk of a defamation claim from alleged harassers in the event the complaint is not well founded. Ask victims how they want to resolve the matter, but never promise you will take that action. Victims' responses will provide guidance on volatility of claims.
4. Interview alleged harassers next. Provide enough information about complaints, going through objectionable conduct item by item, so accused parties understand how to respond. Get written statements from alleged harassers, since you likely will have more leverage with them than with victims due to the potential disciplinary nature of investigations.
5. If harassers don't deny conduct but explain the circumstances, there is no need to investigate further. Instead, create appropriate remedies.
6. However, when faced with a "he said, she said" claim, you should investigate further. If no witnesses to the alleged conduct come forth, ask if anyone else had ever been subjected to objectionable conduct by the accused.

7. If complaints are corroborated, determine if there were mitigating circumstances and take appropriate disciplinary action. If feasible, transfer harassers, rather than victims. If the harassment included physical assault, termination would be an appropriate action.
8. If complaints cannot be proven either way, alleged harassers and victims should not be disciplined. Instead, inform alleged harassers that significant disciplinary action will be taken if another incident occurs. The warning should be documented and placed in your confidential investigation file.
9. Whether or not complaints are corroborated, tell accusers what was discovered in the investigation and describe disciplinary actions taken.
10. Prepare for possible retaliation and continually monitor the situation to ensure alleged harassers do not engage in more objectionable conduct.
11. The information learned during investigations serves as a valuable opportunity for reducing the risk of sexual harassment. Holding refresher sexual harassment training sessions is productive for all employees, including supervisory personnel. Employees should be able to recognize sexual harassment when it occurs. It is a supervisor's responsibility to eliminate a climate that encourages harassment. They should set the tone by discouraging swearing, sexual jokes, heavy after-work partying and a lower standard of conduct on business trips. Remember, employers' duties don't necessarily end outside company time and property.

Source: Cain, K. & Heischmidt, K.A. (April, 1995). Implementing business ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics, 14,* 299-308.